

**Midwest Natural Resources Group
Communications Sub-Committee**

Communications Plan

I. Background

In an unparalleled move, 14 Federal agencies, with 14 distinct missions, have formed the Midwest Natural Resources Group. The Group, comprised of senior agency executives, have joined in a shared vision to focus on the health and vitality of natural resources in the Midwest. This dynamic partnership is marshaling its resources to concentrate its efforts on 13 focus areas which fall into either the Great Lakes or Big Rivers basin. The Group, and agency professionals will seek input and active involvement from State and tribal governments and local communities as well as other natural resource groups, private landowners and the general public.

II. Introduction

Integrated throughout this Communications Plan (The Plan), and in the recommended outreach products and activities, is the theme “the power of partnerships”.... Federal agencies cooperating to enhance assistance to non-Federal partners to improve the health and vitality of natural resources in the Midwest. This Communications Plan focuses on using broad, understandable messages, common agency goals, and the strength of diverse agency missions. We will publicize successes, the importance of our work, and how our programs affect the quality of life for people in the Midwest. The Plan specifically targets its messages, products and recommended actions: to Congressional Members and their staffs, to employees and executives of the 13 partner agencies (internal communications), and the general public. The Plan is intended to be carried out sequentially over a one-and-a-half to two-year time frame.

III. Definitions

A. The Midwest Natural Resources Group is comprised of senior executives of the following Federal agencies: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy, Federal Highway Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Office of Surface Mining, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

B. The specific states which encompass the Midwest, as defined by the Group, are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

C. The 13 focus areas are: (1) within the Big Rivers basin -- Illinois River, Minnesota River, Missouri River, Ohio River, Ozark Plateau, St Croix River, and Upper Mississippi River; and, (2) within the Great Lakes basin – Detroit River/St Clair River, Fox River/Green Bay, Great Lakes (general), Saginaw River and Bay, Southern Lake Erie, and Southern Lake Michigan.

IV. Goals

The key communication goals of the Midwest Natural Resources Group are divided into (1) goals associated with the Group and, (2) those associated with the targeted audiences. The goals are as follows:

Goals for the Group:

- Provide an umbrella Communications Plan for the Group and as guidance for agencies' use in "step-down" communications plans for the focus areas.
- Facilitate communications between and among the Group members, the Environmental Round Table, focus area teams, partners, and targeted audiences.
- Provide the focus area teams with tools to engage target audiences.

Goals for Targeted Audiences:

- Educate and inform targeted audiences about the 13 focus areas and the goals of the Group to improve and enhance understanding and support for improving the natural resources of the Midwest.
- Inform targeted audiences about the successes (including efficiencies of shared resources) of the focus area teams and partnerships.
- Demonstrate a shared vision among the 13 agencies of the Group.
- Communicate the message "partnership in action" to targeted audiences.
- Communicate with targeted audiences in one, understandable/plain language, voice.

V. Key Targeted Audiences

The following audiences have been identified as the key targeted audiences for the purposes of this communications plan:

A. Members of Congress

(This includes Members, Congressional staff, Congressional committees, special Congressional Task Forces.)

B. General Public (This includes special interest groups and the public at large.)

C. Agency In-Reach (This involves internal communications with agency employees including senior agency executives)

VI. Broad Communications Message

Fourteen Federal agencies, with natural resources-related missions, have formed a dynamic partnership which is successfully working to improve the health and vitality of natural resources and the quality of life in the Midwest.

VII. Specific Communications Messages To Specific Targeted Audiences:

A. Congress (Congressional Members, Congressional staff, Congressional committees, special Congressional Task Forces)

- Fourteen Federal agencies, with natural resources-related missions, have formed a dynamic partnership and is successfully working to improve the health and vitality of natural resources and the quality of life in the Midwest.
- Combining resources, Federal agencies are efficiently and effectively using tax dollars to enhance the quality of life for citizens in the Midwest.
- The Midwest is a nationally critical area, in terms of its value to the economy and its natural resources. It has tremendous value for navigation, flood management, recreation, agriculture, power generation, water supply, water quality, economic development, transportation, public and private lands, tourism, cultural history, education, aesthetics and as habitat for fish and wildlife.

- Federal agencies are addressing some of their critical mission goals (mandated by the Government Performance and Results Act) by participating in the Midwest Natural Resources Group, and reporting results, progress, and successes to Members of Congress and the American people.
- The Group is analyzing Federal and partnership activities in the focus areas in terms of (1) coordination, identification and enhancement of existing efforts being undertaken by Federal and non-Federal partners; and (2) exploration of, and commitment to, new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration in the Midwest.
- A strong, dynamic Federal partnership is working shoulder-to-shoulder successfully and effectively in concert with a host of other partners having an interest in Midwest natural resources.
- This partnership Group has identified 13 areas of the Midwest and is focusing and marshaling its collective resources to address natural resource issues and goals in these areas.
- Please visit a focus area near you and see what we have done. This will help you better understand how we impact the quality of life of your constituents and help you gather vital information to solve natural resource issues in your State.
- We are building on our successes.
- We have been effective and here is what we hope to accomplish for your constituents in the future (reference goals set forth in Executive Summaries)
- Goals of the focus areas provide a long-term vision and a long-range commitment from all key parties.
- This partnership enables agencies to more easily and effectively identify and solve problems which cannot be done agency by agency. It views the unique differences of agencies, as well as their commonly held goals, as strength; and can apply these qualities to efficiently and cost effectively solve problems and explore new opportunities to benefit people and the natural resources of the Midwest.
- Federal agencies are dedicated to excellence and service to the American people.

B. General public (Special interest groups and the public at large.)

- Fourteen Federal agencies, with natural resources-related missions, have formed a dynamic partnership and is successfully working to improve the health and vitality of natural resources and the quality of life in the Midwest.
- The Midwest is a nationally critical area, in terms of its value to the economy and its natural resources. It has tremendous value for navigation, flood management, recreation, agriculture, power generation, water supply, water quality, economic development, transportation, public and private lands, tourism, cultural history, education, aesthetics and as habitat for fish and wildlife.
- Combining resources, Federal agencies are efficiently and effectively using tax dollars to enhance the quality of life for citizens in the Midwest.
- Please visit a focus area near you and see what we have done for you.
- The Federal government is successful in the Midwest (reference case studies, areas of success, accomplishment reports)
- The goals of the focus areas are a long-term view for improving, enhancing, restoring, protecting and maintaining the health and vitality of natural resources.
- Your Federal agencies are providing “one stop shopping” – making it easier for the public to navigate the Federal bureaucracy and work with Federal agencies.
- This partnership empowers agencies to identify and solve problems which cannot be done agency by agency. It views the unique differences, as well as their commonly held goals, as strength; and can apply these qualities to efficiently and cost effectively solve problems and explore new opportunities to benefit people and the natural resources of the Midwest.
- We are making life better for you and your grandchildren and for generations to come.
- Federal agencies are dedicated to excellence and service to the American people.

C. Agency In-Reach (Internal communications with agency employees including senior agency executives.)

- The Midwest Natural Resources Group exists and Federal partners are working together to: support each other's missions as they relate to natural resources goals; apply unique skills to solve problems; and apply distinct missions and skills to identify opportunities for improving and broadening partnership.
- There is strength in differences; by marshaling the diverse resources, skills and abilities of different Federal agencies, efforts applied to natural resources and problem-solving abilities will be enhanced.
- The synergy of this powerful partnership creates success.
- We all get credit for accomplishments in front of Congress and the public. Together we are more than the sum of our individual agencies. Our success should be measured and reflected by citizens when they vote.
- The Group's initiatives will serve agencies in Department budget proposals to Congress.
- Fourteen Federal agencies, with natural resources-related missions, have formed a dynamic partnership and is successfully working to improve the health and vitality of natural resources and the quality of life in the Midwest.
- Combining resources, Federal agencies are effectively using tax dollars to enhance the quality of life for citizens in the Midwest.
- The Midwest is a nationally critical area, in terms of its value to the economy and its natural resources. It has tremendous value for navigation, flood management, recreation, agriculture, power generation, water supply, water quality, economic development, transportation, public and private lands, tourism, cultural history, education, aesthetics and as habitat for fish and wildlife.
- Federal agencies are addressing some their critical mission goals (mandated by the Government Performance and Results Act) by participating in the Midwest Natural Resources Group, and reporting results, progress, and successes to Members of Congress and the American people.
- The Group is analyzing Federal and partnership activities in the focus areas in terms of (1) coordination, identification and enhancement of the accomplishments of existing efforts being undertaken by Federal and non Federal partners; and , (2) exploration of, and commitment toward, new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.
- This partnership Group has identified 13 areas of the Midwest and is focusing and

marshaling its collective resources to address natural resources issues and goals in these areas.

- Please visit a focus area near you and see what we (Federal employees like you and their partners) have done.
- Goals of the focus areas provide a long-term vision. For improving, enhancing, restoring, protecting and maintaining the health and vitality of Midwest natural resources, we need a long-range commitment from agency senior executives.
- This partnership empowers agencies to identify and solve problems which cannot be done agency by agency. It views the unique differences, as well as their commonly held goals, as strength; and can apply these qualities to efficiently and cost effectively solve problems and explore new opportunities to benefit people and the natural resources of the Midwest.
- Federal agency employees are dedicated to excellence and service to the American people.
- The public does not see a difference between Federal agencies. We're in it together...we all win or we all lose.

VIII. Recommended Products, Actions, Resources & Cost Estimates

A. Table Number 1 = Highest Priorities

Prod/Act/Res.	Audience	Priority* (see note below)	Estimated Cost	By Whom/When
Accomp. Reporting System +++ (see note below) a. Biannual Report to Congress	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$25k to \$35k a. \$50 to \$100/printed copy	
News Releases	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$2k each	
Brochure	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$7k to \$10k	
Web Site a. Threaded Discussion Group	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$8k to \$10k w/\$5k to maintain	
Fact Sheets on Focus Areas a. 13 Separate Fact Sheets b. 1 Overall Fact Sheet	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$5k	
Letter from MNRG Execs. to Agency leaders/attach MNRG Charter	Internal Comm.	A	\$0	
Photo Library	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$0	
Agency Briefings	Internal Comm.	A		
Q's & A's	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$0	
MNRG Logo	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$5k for design	

Map of Midwest and Focus Areas, including Congressional Districts	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$3k	
Exec Summary of Focus Areas - Revised with graphics/photos	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	A	\$2k	

****Note: Priority A = Highest Priority with a time frame of six months from approval of the Communications Plan by MNRG Executive Committee***

+++Note: It is recommended that one site be created for this reporting system with pull-down menus and easily understandable fields; and all partners have access to it in order to submit accomplishments. All focus area team members (including partners) will be able to submit reports. All agencies will have “read only” access to the database.

B. Table Number 2 = Second Highest Priorities

Prod/Act/Res	Audience	Priority** (see note below)	Estimated Cost	By Whom/When
Briefing Packet	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	B	\$5k	
Video B-Roll	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	B	\$25K to \$30k	
Case Studies	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	B	\$0	
Hill Briefings	Congress	B	\$0 (each agency pays per diem, etc.)	
Courtesy Briefings	Congress, General Public	B	\$0	
Media Briefings	Congress General Public	B	\$0	
Field Trips	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	B	\$0	
Partnership Award	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	B	\$2k to \$5k	

*****Note: Priority B = Second Highest Priority with a time frame of six to 12 months from approval by of the Communications Plan by MNRG Executive Committee***

C. Table Number 3 = Third Highest Priorities

Prod/Act/Res	Audience	Priority *** (see note below)	Cost Estimate	By Whom/When
Exhibit	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	C	\$30k	
Posters	Congress, General Public Internal Comm.	C	\$15 to \$20k	
Radio Public Service Announcements	General Public	C	\$4k to \$5k each	
Special Events ++ (see note below)	Congress, General Public, Internal Comm.	C	\$2k to \$5 each	

*****Note: Priority C = Third Highest Priority with a 12 to 18 months from approval of the Communications Plan by MNRG Executive Committee**

++Note: This may fall into Priority A table, above, if November meeting includes special media event and field trip.

D. Cost Estimates:

The estimate for “A” Priorities is:

- \$57,000 to \$67,000 without the biannual reports.
- Biannual reports are estimated at \$50 to \$100 per printed copy

The estimate for “B” Priorities is:

- \$32,000 to \$40,000

The estimate for “C” Priorities is:

- \$50,000 to \$90,000

The total estimate for this package is: \$139,000 to \$197,000

IX. Evaluation

- The Communications Sub-Committee will evaluate this Communications Plan after the joint meeting of the Midwest Natural Resources Group and the Environmental Round Table in November. The Communications Plan will be revised, at that time, to incorporate new information, recommendations, etc.
- This is a “living” document and, as such, will be reevaluated by the Communications Sub-Committee on an ongoing basis. The time-frame for Communications Plan evaluations will be set at each Sub-Committee meeting.

X. Addendum Number 1: Role of Communications Sub-Committee

- The Communications Sub-Committee produces the overall Communications Plan for the Midwest Natural Resources Group and the Environmental Round Table. This Communications Plan focuses on integrated communication involving the 13 focus areas. The overall purpose of the Sub-Committee is to leverage the positive results of focus area projects and foster a broader base of support, understanding and recognition of key natural resource issues, opportunities, challenges and accomplishments. We expect our ultimate result to be increased attention to these matters by Congress, the public, the media and agency employees.
- The Communications Sub-Committee serves as an advisory and communications planning group for the Midwest Natural Resources Group.
- As appropriate, the Communications Sub-Committee will produce, or oversee the production of, marketing documents, communications messages, or news releases on the accomplishments of the overall effort or the effort of individual teams.
- One rule at Communications Sub-Committee meetings is that members present make decisions. Absent members abide by those decisions.
- Sub-Committee members work together cooperatively, and can rely upon one another, as needed, to get tasks accomplished.
- Regarding the Group’s decision on standing committees, refer to recommendation number 2 (second bullet), below.

XI. Addendum Number 2: Recommendations

The Communications Sub-Committee recommends the following be approved by the Midwest Natural Resources Group:

- Communications Plan in its entirety
- Communications Sub-Committee become a standing committee for the purposes of consistency, quality control, and oversight of the Communications Plan, process and implementation.
- Midwest Natural Resources Group and Environmental Round Table regularly scheduled meetings be located near on-the-ground focus area sites, thereby providing a venue (such as field trips) and field activity showcase for media and Members of Congression and their staffs.
- Agency Directors, or appropriate senior executive authorities, demonstrate support of Communications Sub-Committee members by empowering, encouraging, and funding their work on Sub-Committee and Communications Plan tasks as needed.
- Communications Sub-Committee members attendance at November Midwest Natural Resources Group and Environmental Round Table Meeting.
- Communications Sub-Committee to meet for one full day after the November meeting (above) for the purpose of revising the Communications Plan as needed.
- Funding of one full-time staff person/contractor for implementation of the Communications Plan and one full-time staff person to manage the Accomplishment Reporting System and related reports.
- Communications Sub-Committee be charged with advising focus area team members about the Communications Plan process, and how to step down and implement the Plan for each specific each focus area.